

Carter's Asia Policy

In the week since the fall of the Gandhi government in India, syndicated columnists Joseph Kraft and William Safire have called on the U.S.A. to create a new "triangle" of nations to contain Soviet influence in Asia. These suggestions have fallen on receptive ears in the Carter Administration, which has signaled it wants to bring about a new India-China "detente" based on the anti-Soviet tendencies of the ruling governments of both countries.

The Soviet Union's setback in India can result in additional strategic gains for the Carter Administration only to the extent that pro-development leaders in other Asian countries — Pakistan's Prime Minister Bhutto, Indonesian President Suharto, and Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Bandaranaike — are forced to end their resistance to World Bank demands and friendship with the Soviet Union. Within a week of Mrs. Gandhi's ouster, these governments have come under heavy attack. The Carter policy for Asia is war, to be brought about by such

"allies" as the Janata Party in India, the CIA-trained Pakistani military establishment and even the remnants of Maoists in China.

The deterioration in the Indian situation is reflected in recent developments regionally. In Pakistan, Bhutto is under pressure from the military establishment to quit. A spokesman for the Sri Lankan foreign ministry has announced that Sri Lanka is receptive to Carter's Indian Ocean demilitarization proposals — even without the full dismantling of the U.S. base in Diego Garcia. If this is the case, it would make a mockery out of the non-aligned group's proposal to turn the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace and development.

What follows is an analysis of two key Asian situations — India and Indonesia. If Safire and Kraft's "scenarios" for U.S. intervention are followed up, these two countries will be the first targets. Instability there spells chaos, communal wars, hunger and famine on a scale never before witnessed.

Desai's Program: Domestic Misery, Regional War

INDIA

Only one week in office, India's new Janata Party government has already moved to reverse in all domestic and foreign policy areas, the fundamental commitments made by the Gandhi government. Prime Minister Morarji Desai has announced a major reappraisal of India's friendly relations with the Soviet Union. His new finance minister H.M. Patel has halted all new state sector development projects, freezing India's Five Year Plan and announcing that the government will henceforth embark on a new economic program favoring deindustrialization, ruralization, self-reliance and slave-labor "full-employment."

These policies are behind the fear in many informed circles that, within weeks, India will face working-class rioting, strikes and chaos in its northern states, and a major North-South confrontation provoked by the fanatical northern Hindu sect Jan Sangh, part of the ruling Janata Party. Apprehensions in India's southern states, where the Janata Party lost by large margins to the Congress Party, were substantiated last week when the Jan Sangh initiated no-confidence motions, strikes and walkouts to force secular Congress Party state administrations out of office.

The most optimistic Asian scholars give Desai only an outside chance of lasting out the year. A desperate conglomerate of four or more parties, with conflicting ideologies, the landlords, "socialists," rich peasants, moneylenders, and monetarist business backers of the Janata have unified around deindustrialization policies that will surely set off massive unrest in India's huge industrial workforce. Religious chauvinism, explicitly espoused by the Jan Sangh Hindu supremacists, violates the concept of India as a secular, stable nation, the basic commitment of the Congress and Mrs. Gandhi that the Janata has now moved to eradicate. Regional chaos is merely one step beyond.

Foreign Policy

The reversal of Mrs. Gandhi's policies of peace and development is most clearly seen in the string of outright provocations against the Soviet Union and the non-aligned movement evident in Morarji Desai's first foreign policy statements. According to the *London Times*, "Desai has emphasized that the (Indo-Soviet) treaty could not be dissolved but should it ever hurt India's interest it would be for the Soviet Union to do what they want in the light of India's 'non-aligned' stance." Promptly thereafter Desai accepted the resignation of Planning Commission chairman P.N. Haksar, one of the leading pro-socialist development planners involved in

making Indo-Soviet economic relations the backbone of the economy.

On March 28, in a parliamentary address written by Desai for the Indian President B.M. Jatti, the parameters for beginning a new economic policy was announced. Desai made full employment his top priority, "It may not be to the liking of everyone, but we will see that each man gets a livelihood — that much is possible," he said. Then he charted out the resettlement of millions from India's cities into the countryside and the "reassessment" of high-technology development projects, like India's nuclear energy program, in favor of employment in planning and implementing labor-intensive agricultural projects.

Desai's economic intentions were received with cheers by the World Bank and the Carter Administration. On March 27 the *Journal of Commerce* interviewed former World Bank executive director Eugene Black, who praised Desai as an "economic realist." The *Washington Post* welcomed Desai's ideas as an endorsement of Carter's nuclear energy "ban." In an editorial the *Post* even suggested that India could be used as a model to dissuade other Third World countries seeking nuclear power plants.

How to Implement Policy

To get this policy through, a new Janata cabinet "democratically" composed of a member from each Janata faction, has been appointed. Desai, as Prime Minister, is the IMF's favorite politician in India, and the leader of the anti-China lobby which in 1962 played a key role in the Sino-Indian war hysteria. A.B. Vaypayee, the new Foreign Minister is leader of the Hindu revivalist party, Jan Sangh, known for its fanatical anti-Pakistan and anti-Soviet pronouncements. Finance Minister H.M. Patel is associated to the Swatantra Party, the most reactionary business group. Steel and Mines Minister Biju Patnaik is a big industrialist avidly opposed to nationalization and Indian state sector development. George Fernandes, the new Communications Minister is a "Marxist" who may well come into conflict with right-wing Home Minister Charan Singh, his "former political enemy."

That Desai will face tremendous difficulty in implementing his policies in the face of a strong development planning and state sector base is well understood by the Janata Party itself. Every political measure the government has taken since it has come to power has been aimed to intimidate and force the pro-growth axis to surrender its programs without resistance. The Indian daily *Patriot* of March 26 reported that following Desai's announcement that all prisoners held under the Mainte-

ance of Internal Security Act (MISA) were to be released, all of India's major cities saw the Jan Sangh's Hindu militia practice military drills in the major parks.

It is this wing of the Janata Party that is primed to provoke chaos. According to sources close to Desai, he is counting heavily on the Jan Sangh, the major party in the Janata coalition, to bring down at least four major Congress Party-controlled state governments in northern India before the summer. In the week Desai has been in office, five northern states were assaulted by Janata Party led no-confidence motions against the state assemblies.

The fall of the Kashmir government demonstrates aptly how domestic instability in India can set off internal chaos and regional war. Kashmir borders on Pakistan is still disputed territory. Election campaigns are a focus for fomenting Hindu-Muslim tensions. The Gandhi government had based its Kashmir policy on secularism, and Pakistani Prime Minister Bhutto had moved toward a similar position in recent months. Now the push for elections opens up various possibilities — either to use the "Pakistani threat" to unify India for domestic austerity policies or to give the revanchist anti-Indian Pakistani military the ideal issue to oust Bhutto.

The Kashmir instability plays into Bhutto's own domestic problems. He has faced riots produced by religious fanatics for the past three weeks, and barely weathered a nationally called general strike last month by declaring a holiday. Still, 10 people were killed in riots in the Punjab region and the city of Lahore, where demonstrations brought down the military dictator of the 1960s, Ayub Khan. British papers last week began to report for the first time tremendous schisms inside Bhutto's own Peoples Party. In Punjab one party official has been quoted as saying, "Only an act of bravery can save him. If what he is talking about is a single party system plus the army, he will not last." The U.S. weekly *Seven Days*, last week "predicted" that the actions of the Islamic parties coalition will force Bhutto to call on the military to quell the riots. Such a call would be an open admission of inability to rule.

Elsewhere on the subcontinent, the fall of the Gandhi government prompted Amnesty International to request Carter to cut off all economic aid to Bangladesh on the issue of "human rights." Amnesty International is now defending the freedom of the Jatiyo Samajtrantir Dal (JSD) prisoners, the very people who involved in the assassination of Bengali President Mujibur Rehman in August 1975 and the attempt to bring down the Bangladesh government. In November 1975 the JSD, a virulently anti-Indian Islamic sect unsuccessfully attempted the assassination of Indian Ambassador Samar Sen in Dacca.